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Message Text

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15
ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EUR-25 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03

INR-11 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03

SS-20 USIA-15 NIC-01 SY-04 AID-20 DRC-01 /147 W
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R 262200Z JUL 74
FM AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9575

C O N F I D E N T I A L SANTIAGO 4446

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: CI, PINS, PINT
SUBJ: POLICE CRACKDOWN ON CRIMINALS

1. SUMMARY. MASSIVE POLICE SWEEPS RECENTLY BEEN UNDERTAKEN TO COMBAT SHARP INCREASE IN CRIME. SEVERAL THOUSAND PERSONS HAVE BEEN DETAINED IN PAST TWO WEEKS OR SO, MOST ONLY BRIEFLY. ALTHOUGH RADIO MOSCOW CHARGES THESE RAIDS HAVE POLITICAL GOAL OF SUPPRESSING INCREASED POPULAR DISCONTENT WITH REGIME, WE SO FAR SEE NO HIDDEN POLITICAL MOTIVES. END SUMMARY.

2. CHILE, AND PARTICULARLY GREATER SANTIAGO, HAS BEEN SUFFERING A SHARP INCREASE IN CRIME FOR LAST MONTH OR SO. PARTICULARLY NOTABLE ARE AUTO THEFTS, ARMED ROBBERIES, AND STREET MUGGINGS.

3. ON JULY 9, DIR. OF INVESTIGATIONS GEN(R) ERNESTO BAEZA ANNOUNCED A SEVERE CRACKDOWN ON CRIME AND CIMINALS. BAEZA LINKED SOME CRIMINAL BANDS TO SUCH EXTREME LEFTIST POLITICAL GROUPS AS MOVEMENT OF REVOLUTIONARY LEFT (MIR), ALLEGING MIR IS USING CRIMINAL ACTS AS "TRAINING GROUND" FOR POTENTIAL TERRORIST ACTIVITIES.

4. SINCE BAEZA'S ANNOUNCEMENT, SECURITY FORCES, PRINCIPALLY CARABINEROS, HAVE ARRESTED LARGE NUMBERS OF PEOPLE IN NATION-WIDE SWEEPS. ON WEEKEND OF JULY 20-21, FOR EXAMPLE, CARABINEROS ANNOUNCED 10,838 PERSONS NATIONWIDE WERE DETAINED. IN
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GRETER SANTIAGO AREA, GOVT. ANNOUNCED 552 PERSONS WERE

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DETAINED EVENING OF JULY 22 AND 23, AND 214 EVENING OF JULY 24. LARGEST SINGLE CATEGORY OF DETENTIONS IS "ON SUSPICION"; OTHER CATEGORIES INCLUDE PUBLIC DRUNKENNESS, DRIVING WITHOUT A LICENSE, AND "OFFENSES AGAINST PUBLIC MORALITY." APPARENTLY MOST OF THOSE DETAINED WERE HELD FOR VERY SHORT TIME AND THEN RELEASED.

5. RADIO MOSCOW HAS BEEN BITTERLY CRITICAL OF THESE ROUNDUPS AND HAS ATTRIBUTED POLITICAL MOTIVES TO THEM. A BROADCAST OF JULY 25 HEARD IN SANTIAGO, FOR EXAMPLE, CHARGED THAT NOT ONLY ARE THEY PRIME EXAMPLES OF THE "REPRESSIVE" TACTICS OF THE "FASCIST DICTATORSHIP" BUT ALSO THAT THEIR GOAL IS "TO SUPPRESS THE GROWING (POPULAR) DISCONTENT AGAINST THE DICTATORSHIP'S BRUTAL ECONOMIC POLICY AND AGAINST THE MAINTENANCE OF THOUSANDS OF POLITICAL PRISONERS." PERSONS ARRESTED IN THESE SWEEPS HAVE SUFFERED "SOPHISTICATED TORTURE" AND SOME HAVE BEEN "SUMMARILY EXECUTED," ACCORDING TO RADIO MOSCOW.

6. COMMENT. DESPITE OFF-THE-CUFF REMARKS OF BAEZA, WE SEE NO POLITICAL MOTIVES BEHIND THESE OPERATIONS ALTHOUGH THAT POSSIBILITY CERTAINLY EXISTS. CRIME WAVE COULD IN PART BE DUE TO CONTINUING SEVERE WAGE-PRICE SQUEEZE, WITH ITS ATTENDANT HARDSHIP AMONG LOWER CLASSES.

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